

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 044254

NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT JERUSALEM 0477, SENT SECSTATE 21 FEB:

QUOTE S E C R E T JERUSALEM 0477

NODIS

FROM ATHERTON, U.S. DEL NO. 1

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, XF, UK, US

SUBJECT: BRIEFING OF BRITISH ON MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS

1. IN RESPONSE TO BRITISH REQUEST STERNER STOPPED OFF
IN LONDON TO BRIEF BRITISH ON CURRENT STATUS OF EACE
EFFORTS AND OBJECTIVES OF ATHERTON MISSION. BRITISH
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PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS TO BE BROUGHT UP TO DATE IN VIEW
OF KING HUSSEIN'S CURRENT PRESENCE IN LONDON AND
OWEN'S TRIP TO JORDAN AND ISRAEL NEXT WEEK.

2. STERNER, ACCOMPANIED BY KINSOLVING, SPENT HOUR AND HALF WITH
MICHAEL WEIR AND HIS FCO MIDDLE EAST COLLEAGUES FEBRUARY 20.
HE SAID PRIMARY GOAL OF ATHERTON MISSION WAS TO MAKE

PROGRESS TOWARD AGREEMENT ON DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AND DESCRIBED IN SOME DETAIL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TWO SIDES ON LANGUAGE IN PARAGRAPH ON PALESTINIANS. LATEST EGYPTIAN FORMULATION WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN ATHERTON ON HIS LAST TRIP HAD YET TO BE CONVEYED TO ISRAELIS, AND IN ADDITION MOST RECENT WORD FROM SADAT WAS THAT HE WISHED TO REVIEW EGYPTIAN LANGUAGE IN LIGHT OF HIS TALKS IN WASHINGTON. SADAT HAD MADE IT CLEAR IN WASHINGTON THAT HE CONTINUED TO VIEW DECLARATION AS THE ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP AND HAD ASKED US TO CONTINUE WORK ON IT. STERNER SAID IT WAS BEGINNING TO BE CLEAR SOMETHING CLOSE TO OUR ASWAN FORMULA WAS ONLY LIKELY COMPROMISE.

3. WEIR ASKED WHETHER SADAT THOUGHT WHAT WE HAD IN MIND FOR LANGUAGE ON PALESTINIANS, EVEN IF ISRAELIS COULD BE BROUGHT TO ACCEPT IT, WOULD BE ENOUGH TO BRING HUSSEIN INTO NEGOTIATIONS. STERNER SAID SADAT SEEMED TO HAVE REALISTIC ESTIMATE OF HUSSEIN'S CURRENT ATTITUDE AND REALIZED IT MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH. WOULD SADAT NEVERTHELESS PROCEED WITH BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES? STERNER SAID WE HAVE NO CERTAIN ANSWERS TO THIS. PERHAPS SADAT HIMSELF HAD NOT DECIDED FIRMLY IN HIS OWN SECRET

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MIND AT WHAT POINT A REASONABLE BASIS WOULD HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED TO JUSTIFY HUSSEIN AND THE OTHER PARTIES TO JOIN AND FOR HIM TO PROCEED ON HIS OWN IF THE OTHERS REFUSED. PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY HAD PROBED THIS POINT WITH SADAT BUT WE HAD RECEIVED NO DEFINITIVE ANSWERS. FOR THE TIME BEING, HOWEVER, IT WAS CLEAR SADAT SAW JORDAN ENTERING THE NEGOTIATIONS AS HIGHLY DESIRABLE OBJECTIVE.

4. WEIR ASKED OUR READING OF HUSSEIN'S CURRENT POSITION. STERNER SAID HUSSEIN HAD RATHER DEPRESSED OUTLOOK ON CURRENT PEACE PROSPECTS AND WAS ATTACHING NUMBER OF UNREASONABLE PRECONDITIONS TO JOINING POLITICAL COMMITTEE NEGOTIATIONS. IT WAS ONE OF ATHERTON'S PURPOSES IN VISITING JORDAN TO TRY TO GET HIM IN MORE POSITIVE FRAME OF MIND AND POINT OUT THAT IT WAS NOT REALISTIC TO EXPECT ISRAEL TO AGREE TO THE KIND OF FAR-REACHING OBJECTIVES HE WAS TALKING ABOUT AS PRECONDITIONS FOR HIS ENTRY INTO NEGOTIATIONS. WEIR SAID THEY HAD

REPORT IN THEIR INTELLIGENCE CHANNELS WHICH DESCRIBED HUSSEIN'S CURRENT MOOD AS "DESPAIRING." STERNER SAID WE ALSO HAD IMPRESSION HE HAD GONE INTO SOMETHING OF A FUNK LATELY AND IT WOULD BE HELPFUL, IN TALKS BRITISH WOULD HAVE WITH HIM IN LONDON AND AMMAN, IF THEY COULD REINFORCE SOME OF THE THEMES WE WOULD ALSO BE USING WITH HIM.

5. WEIR ASKED ABOUT THE STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS ON THE WEST BANK/GAZA PROBLEM. STERNER SAID THAT IF IMPASSE WAS TO BE AVOIDED ON DECLARATION OF PTIBBLWPNBLIT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO ENGAGE THE PARTIES (INCLUDING HUSSEIN) IN A DISCUSSION OF CONCRETE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TWO
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TERRITORIES. THIS WOULD NOT BE EASY SINCE BOTH EGYPTIANS AND ISRAELIS HAD THEIR OWN REASONS FOR WANTING TO DEFER DISCUSSION OF THIS PROBLEM. ATHERTON WOULD BE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH THREE THINGS: (A) TO GET THE ISRAELIS TO BEGIN TO THINK IN CONCRETE TERMS OF HOW THE BEGIN PLAN COULD BE MODIFIED TO MAKE IT MORE ACCEPTABLE TO ARABS; (B) ELICIT EGYPT'S IDEAS IN WRITING IF POSSIBLE ABOUT ARRANGEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK/GAZA; AND (C) TRY TO DETERMINE WHAT HUSSEIN WOULD CONSIDER AS REASONABLE BASIS IN TERMS OF WEST BANK/GAZA PLAN FOR JOINING NEGOTIATIONS.

6. WEIR ASKED ABOUT OUR OWN THOUGHTS FOR ARRANGEMENTS IN WEST BANK/GAZA THAT MIGHT PROVE WORKABLE. STERNER SAID WE WERE THINKING IN TERMS OF AN INTERIM REGIME FOR TRANSITIONAL PERIOD THAT WOULD PROVIDE FOR PROCESS BY WHICH FINAL ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE NEGOTIATED BUT NOT ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THESE IN THE INITIAL NEGOTIATIONS. BROAD FEATURES OF SUCH A REGIME MIGHT BE THAT ITS AUTHORITY DERIVED FROM AGREEMENT AMONG THE PARTIES TO THE INITIAL AGREEMENT (WHICH WOULD INCLUDE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES), AND NOT FROM ISRAEL ALONE; THAT PALESTINIAN RESIDENTS WOULD HAVE SUBSTANTIAL MEASURE OF SELF-RULE; THAT ISRAEL WOULD RETAIN AUTHORITY FOR OVERALL SECURITY OF AREA DURING THIS PERIOD; AND THAT THE PARTIES, INCLUDING ISRAEL AS WELL AS ELECTED PALESTINIAN RESIDENTS OF WEST BANK AND GAZA, WOULD NEGOTIATE CHOICE OF FINAL ARRANGEMENTS UPON WHICH RESIDENTS OF TERRITORIES COULD EVENTUALLY EXPRESS THEMSELVES. STERNER ASKED BRITISH TO HOLD THESE IDEAS IN CLOSE CONFIDENCE FOR TIME BEING AS WE HAD NOT YET DISCUSSED THEM WITH ALL THE PARTIES.
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7. WEIR ASKED IF WE EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE BREAKTHROUGH ON THESE ISSUES DURING ATHERTON VISIT. STERNER SAID THIS MIGHT NOT BE POSSIBLE, BUT SECRETARY HAD GIVEN ATHERTON MANDATE TO PUSH AHEAD AS RAPIDLY AS HE COULD. IF WE COULD NOT GET GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED TO MAKE NECESSARY DECISIONS WE AT LEAST INTENDED TO MAKE IT CLEAR WHAT WE BELIEVED THOSE DECISIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE IF PEACE PROCESS WAS TO BE KEPT ALIVE.

8. DEPARTMENT PASS CAIRO, TEL AVIV, DAMASCUS, AMMAN, JIDDA, LONDON. NEWLIN UNQUOTE. VANCE

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